
Wash Your Hands



Keeping hands clean is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infection and illness.

Handwashing is a simple thing and it's the best way to prevent infection and illness.

Clean hands prevent infections. Keeping hands clean prevents illness at home, at school, and at work. Hand hygiene practices are key prevention tools in healthcare settings, in daycare facilities, in schools and public institutions, and for the safety of our food.

Handwashing can prevent infection and illness from spreading from family member to family member and, sometimes, throughout a community. The basic rule is to wash hands before preparing food and after handling uncooked meat and poultry, before eating, after changing diapers, after coughing, sneezing, or blowing one's nose into a tissue, after using the bathroom, and after touching animals or anything in the animal's environment.



Wash Your Hands: The Right Way

When washing hands with soap and water:

- Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water if it is available.
- Rub hands together to make a lather and scrub all surfaces.
- Continue rubbing hands for 15-20 seconds. Need a timer? Imagine singing "Happy Birthday" twice through to a friend.
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer.

If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet.

- Always use soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.

If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub to clean your hands. Alcohol-based hand rubs significantly reduce the number of germs on skin and are fast-acting.

When using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- Apply product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.

For more information on handwashing and other food safety issues, please call 1-800-CDC-INFO 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; email cdcinfo@cdc.gov; or visit www.cdc.gov

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HandWashing/>